The Human Services Comprehensive Examination (HSCE)
Content Outline

Examination Purpose

The purpose of the Human Services Comprehensive Examination (HSCE) is to assess a student's understanding of and ability to apply cited competencies, theories, knowledge, values, ethical standards, and skills.

The HSCE can also provide human services programs with the ability to gain an objective view of the effectiveness of their curriculum, standardize expectations regarding curricular structure across different geographical regions, offer pre- and post-test comparisons at various points during matriculation, compare student data to national averages, and utilize data in self-studies. HSCE scores can also help support programs in obtaining the necessary resources for providing adequate preparation for students entering the human services professions.

Target Population

It is recommended that programs determine when the HSCE is made available to students. The target examinee for the HSCE should currently be in their last semester of human services coursework within a human services degree program of study or certificate. The target population should be familiar with the following content areas:

- History of Human Services
- Human Systems
- Human Service Delivery Systems
- Information Literacy
- Program Planning and Evaluation
- Client Interventions and Strategies
- Interpersonal Communication
- Client-Related Values and Attitudes
- Self-Development

Examination Content

The HSCE includes content aligned with the curriculum section of the National Standards - Associate Degree in Human Services, put forth by the Council for Standards in Human Service Education (CSHSE). The nine domains are:

1. *History of Human Services*. Human services professionals understand and embrace how different human services emerged and the history that guided their development.

2. *Human Systems*. In addition to being knowledgeable of the nature of individuals and groups, human services professionals must also demonstrate an understanding of the multifaceted structure and dynamics of various human systems.

3. *Human Service Delivery Systems*. The human services professional recognizes the varying and dynamic needs related to identifiable human conditions and the delivery systems that provide services across the life span.

4. *Information Literacy*. Human services rely upon the effective utilization of multiple forms of knowledge and accompanying information systems.

5. *Program Planning and Evaluation*. Human services professionals are knowledgeable in assessing and evaluating clients' needs and in planning programs and interventions that will assist clients in reaching their goals and sustaining optimal functioning.

6. *Client Interventions and Strategies*. Human services professionals must understand the values and ethical principles that guide the profession.

7. *Interpersonal Communication*. Human services professionals establish authentic and empathetic relationships with others to provide effective services.

8. *Client-Related Values and Attitudes*. As agents of change, human services professionals must have an understanding of the knowledge, theory, and skills necessary to provide effective services and interventions for clients and client groups.

9. *Self-Development*. Human services professionals utilize their expertise to understand and assist clients while remaining aware of their own values, culture, biases, philosophical beliefs, personalities, and style along with how these characteristics affect clients and professional relationships.

Examination Format and Scores

The HSCE consists of 108 multiple-choice questions, with 12 items per domain. Of the 12 items per section, 10 will be scored items and the remaining two will be pretest items that are not identified to the examinee. These 18 unscored items are used for development purposes. Both scored and unscored items are of the same structure and are interspersed within the examination. Scores for each section and a total score will be reported to institutions for each student. The Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) will provide statistics on the program's students as well as national data. Candidates will have 3 hours to answer the examination questions.

The institution may choose to add components to the examination such as essay questions or questions from specialty areas. CCE leaves the responsibility for scoring additional sections to the institution. In addition, the institution is responsible for determining a minimum criterion score for their students.

Table 1. The Weight for Each Domain

	Domain	Percent of Items*	Number of Scored Items
1	History of Human Services	11	10
2	Human Systems	11	10
3	Human Service Delivery Systems	11	10
4	Information Literacy	11	10
5	Program Planning and Evaluation	11	10
6	Client Interventions and Strategies	11	10
7	Interpersonal Communication	11	10
8	Client-Related Values and Attitudes	11	10
9	Self-Development	11	10

*Each domain represents one-ninth of the examination content. The percentages displayed above have been rounded down from 11.1%.

Table 2. Content Outline

I. Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice

A. Recognize the historical roots of informal helping systems and human services as a discipline and profession.

B. Identify historical and current legislation affecting human services delivery.

C. Distinguish how public and private attitudes influence legislation and the interpretation of policies related to human services.

D. Understand the broader sociopolitical issues that affect human services systems.

II. Human Systems

A. Identify theories of human development, including from a biopsychosocial perspective.

B. Comprehend the role of small groups in human services settings:
   i. Differentiate theories of group dynamics.
   ii. Identify skills needed for group facilitation.

C. Understand changing family structures and roles.

D. Recognize the organizational structures of communities (micro and macro levels, ecological systems, family systems, and the structure of agencies).

E. Understand trauma-informed care, adverse childhood experiences, and the impact of trauma on families, communities, and marginalized groups.

F. Recognize the capacities, limitations, and resiliency of human systems, as well as risk factors and protective factors.

G. Identify the context and the role of diversity (including, but not limited to ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, learning styles, ability, and socio-economic status) in determining and meeting human needs across the life span.

III. Human Services Delivery Systems

A. Recognize the range and characteristics of human services delivery systems and organizations.

B. Understand the range of populations served and needs addressed by human services.

C. Identify the models that are used to conceptualize and integrate prevention, maintenance, intervention, rehabilitation, and healthy functioning.

IV. Information Literacy

A. Demonstrate knowledge of how to obtain, synthesize, and clearly report information from various sources.

B. Recognize the quality of information from various sources, including but not limited to print, audio, video, web, social media, and artificial intelligence-generated content, and understand its application.

C. Identifying appropriate means to uphold confidentiality and share information.

D. Demonstrate knowledge of technologies to locate, evaluate, and effectively disseminate information.

V. Program Planning and Evaluation

A. Demonstrate knowledge of the skills needed to assess and analyze the needs of clients or client groups.

B. Recognize the skills needed to develop goals, and design and implement a plan of action.

C. Identify the skills needed for monitoring and evaluating progress towards goals, outcomes, and the impact on the client or client group.

VI. Client Interventions and Strategies

A. Comprehend theory and knowledge bases of prevention, intervention, and maintenance strategies.

B. Understand the helping skills and mechanisms needed to identify the needs of clients or client groups (observation, interviewing, active listening, collaboration, consultation, and research).

C.   Demonstrate knowledge of the skills needed for:

    i. Case management

        1. Intake interviewing

        2. Identification and use of appropriate resources and referrals

        3. Assessment, planning, and implementation

    ii. Group facilitation

        1. Stages and characteristics of groups and group members

        2. Types of groups (e.g., psychoeducation groups, psychotherapy)

        3. Skills and techniques to facilitate groups

    iii. Consultation

        1. Interagency (e.g., peers and supervisors) and interdisciplinary

        2. Ethical considerations when consulting

VII. Interpersonal Communication

A.   Identify expectations for professional relationships and service provisions.

B.   Identify effective methods for dealing with conflict.

C.   Understand how to establish rapport with clients and build a therapeutic alliance.

D.   Recognize how to develop and sustain behaviors that are congruent with the values and ethics of the profession.

VIII. Client-Related Values and Attitudes

A.   Identify the least intrusive intervention in the least restrictive environment.

B.   Recognize the concepts of client autonomy, self-direction, and self-determination.

C.   Understand the importance of confidentiality of information.

D.   Understand the importance of demonstrating unconditional positive regard and acceptance (the worth and uniqueness of the individual including culture, ethnicity, race, class, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, marginalized groups, and other expressions of diversity).

E.   Recognize that individuals, service systems, society, and technology can change.

F.   Identify interdisciplinary team approaches to problem solving.

G.   Understand how to establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries.

H.   Identify how to apply the ethical standards outlined by the National Organization for Human Services (NOHS) and the Council for Standards in Human Service Education, available at www.nationalhumanservices.org/ethical-standards-for-hs-professionals.

IX. Self-Development

A. Identify appropriate and conscious use of self, including awareness of one's values, cultural bias, philosophies, personality, and style in the effective use of the professional self.

B. Recognize the distinction between personal and professional values.

C. Demonstrate awareness of DEI, anti-racism, accessibility, and social justice.

D. Recognize the importance of and strategies for holistic self-care.

E. Demonstrate the capacity of self-evaluation and reflection on professional self (e.g., journaling, development of a portfolio, or project demonstrating competency).

Sample Items

1. History of Human Services

What Christian-based community agency was founded in 1880 by William Booth in London to help those who lived in poverty?

A. Boy Scouts

B. Goodwill Industries

C. Salvation Army

2. Human Systems

In the context of human services, how does the ecological systems theory explain individual behavior?

A. Individuals interact with various systems like family, community, and broader society.

B. Individuals behave differently based on their environment.

C. Individual behavior is solely determined by genetics.

3. Human Service Delivery Systems

Which of the following is a common characteristic of delivery models used in human services?

A. emphasizes maximizing organizational efficiency with streamlined processes

B. prioritizes making digital interventions and services available for clients

C. emphasizes individual needs and preferences with a client-centered approach

4. **Information Literacy**

   Which is most important to consider when using technology to manage client information in human services?

   A.   cost

   B.   confidentiality

   C.   ease of use

5. **Program Planning and Evaluation**

   Which method is most effective for gathering in-depth information about clients' experiences within a service program?

   A.   focus groups

   B.   employee surveys

   C.   attendance records

6. **Client Interventions and Strategies**

   Which group stage is characterized by a sense of anticipation, excitement, resistance, and confusion from group members?

   A.   Stage 1: Beginning Stage

   B.   Stage 2: Conflict Stage

   C.   Stage 3: Working Stage

7. **Interpersonal Communication**

   Which are qualities commonly used by human service professionals to establish rapport and build a therapeutic alliance?

   A.   warmth, acceptance, and genuineness

   B.   judging, questioning, and interrogation

   C.   silence, projection, and reflection

8. Client-Related Values and Attitudes

Which best represents the concept of "the least intrusive intervention in the least restrictive environment"?

A. offering outpatient counseling for a client with moderate depression

B. referring a client with severe social phobia to participate in a large group

C. using medication as a first approach for a minor behavioral issue

9. Self-Development

Which term best describes when a person denigrates, discriminates, stigmatizes, and consciously puts down another person because of their gender?

A. prejudice

B. sexism

C. stereotyping

Sample Item	Answer
1	C
2	A
3	C
4	B
5	A
6	A
7	A
8	A
9	B